

Essential Services Child Care Policy

Regulated child care services supports economic stability on both a community and provincial level including assisting with gender equality, poverty reduction and enabling parents of young children to participate in the labour market. While Government is recommending where possible, a parent, guardian or caregiver stay home with their children, the importance and necessity of regulated child care services for essential workers, including Early Childhood Educators, in order for essential services to continue is a recognized reality. As such, the following policy has been developed in consultation with Public Health and the Chief Medical Officer of Health for regulated child care centres and regulated family homes that operate during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The COVID-19 pandemic is evolving rapidly, as such this policy is subject to change based on the advice of Public Health and the Chief Medical Officer of Health.

Eligibility:

1. Child care services are available to the following occupations only:
 - a. Front-line health workers (e.g., doctors, nurses);
 - b. Firefighters;
 - c. Paramedics;
 - d. Police Officers;
 - e. Correctional Officers;
 - f. Early Childhood Educators working in Essential Services Child Care providing essential worker child care services; and,
 - g. Other public servants required to work during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Operational Requirements:

1. A child care service operating during the COVID-19 pandemic must operate in accordance with the [Child Care Act, Regulations](#) and [Child Care Policy and Standards](#) plus the following restrictions:
 - a. The child care service must:
 - i. Only provide care to children whose parent/guardian meets the eligibility requirements of an Essential Worker described in this policy;
 - ii. Not operate outside legislated hours (between 6:30 am and 8:30 pm);
 - iii. Operate within the age range for which it is licensed/approved;
 - iv. Operate at half its total licensed capacity/approval; and,
 - v. Maximum of 30 persons (adults and children) per site.
 - b. A homeroom within a child care centre must operate:
 - i. Within its licensed age range;
 - ii. At no more than half its total capacity; and,
 - iii. Not exceed 10 persons (adults and children).
 - c. Where a home/homeroom is approved/licensed for younger and older school aged children, the maximum number of children and adults per home/homeroom is 10 people, regardless of the total capacity;

- d. Travel outside the child care service is not permitted; except to the licensed outdoor play area;
 - e. The licensed outdoor play area is limited to 10 people, including children and adult(s), at any time;
 - f. No children under the age of 12 months may participate in the child care service; and,
 - g. Children and caregivers are to be assigned to a consistent homeroom and are not permitted to enter a homeroom to which they are not assigned.
2. All persons must thoroughly wash hands with soap and water (or use appropriate hand sanitizer) before entering and upon exiting the child care service.
 3. All caregivers must meet the certification requirements to be a caregiver as outlined in section [ELCD-2017-11](#) of the [Child Care Policy and Standards Manual](#).
 4. Registration of children, [Regulation 18](#) and Individual children's records, [Regulation 46](#) must be maintained with the exception of [Regulation 46\(f\)](#) a copy of the record of the child's sleeping, eating and toileting patterns for infants and [Regulation 38\(1\)\(b\)](#) written consent for travel.
 5. Separate daily registers for children participating during the COVID-19 Pandemic is required. These registers must be maintained as per section [ELCD-2017-L2](#) of the [Child Care Policy and Standards Manual](#) plus the daily register must record everyone who enters and leaves the homeroom. This is important for contact tracing should it be required.
 6. Visible signage must be posted in the main entrance of the child care service which indicates the procedures for drop off and pick up of children. Procedures must include:
 - a. Keeping the main entrance locked;
 - b. Providing a contact number for parents to call upon arriving at the child care service for drop-off or pick-up;
 - c. Parents (and children at drop-off time) are to remain in their vehicle until actively screened for COVID-19 symptoms by phone and notified by the child care service that they may enter the child care service in order to maintain physical distancing at arrival and departure times;
 - d. Only permitting one adult family member in the main area of the child care service for drop off or pick up at one time; and
 - e. The identification of one consistent designate person for regular drop off and pick up of children as well as one emergency person.

7. Everyone (Caregivers, children, parents, volunteers, delivery person, and EECD Inspectors) must be proactively screened for COVID-19 symptoms, travel history and contact with person(s) who may have COVID-19; prior to **EACH** time they enter the child care service. Screening includes:
 - a. Asking the following screening questions; Has the individual:
 - i. Or anyone in the family travelled outside the province in the last 14 days?
 - ii. Been in close contact with a known or suspected case of COVID-19?
 - iii. Been in close contact with a person with acute respiratory illness or who has travelled outside of Newfoundland and Labrador within 14 days prior to their illness onset?
 - iv. Presented with any of the following COVID-19 symptoms:
 1. Fever;
 2. Cough;
 3. Difficulty breathing or shortness of breath; or
 4. Aches and pains.
 - b. ***If the answer is yes to any of the screening questions the individual must not enter the child care service.***
8. A child or caregiver who is ill with respiratory illness symptoms (fever, cough, fatigue, and or muscle aches) is not permitted to enter or participate in the child care service for a minimum period of 14 days and is encouraged to contact 811 for further instructions.

Cleaning, Sanitization & Disinfection Requirements:

1. Enhanced cleaning practices to support infection prevention and control must be implemented, including:
 - a. Clean and disinfect high touch surfaces at least twice a day, using an enhanced cleaner/disinfectant used for outbreaks;
 - b. Avoid sensory play (e.g., water or sand activities, use of play-dough);
 - c. Remove shared items such as toys that cannot be easily cleaned and disinfected;
 - d. Reduce clutter and limit toys to those that can be disinfected daily;
 - e. Enhance hand hygiene practices for both staff and children; and
 - f. Reinforce food and container sharing policies.
2. Extra cleaning and sanitization is required for all “high-touch” services. These include:

- a. Counters;
 - b. Tabletops;
 - c. Doorknobs;
 - d. Bathroom fixtures;
 - e. Toilets;
 - f. Phones;
 - g. Keyboards; and
 - h. Tablets.
3. Cleaning and Disinfection for Public Settings must be followed as identified at:
<https://www.gov.nl.ca/covid-19/files/factsheet-covid-19-environmental-cleaning-NL.pdf>
 4. All areas of the child care service are to be sanitized and disinfected at the end of day when all children who have participated have left.
 5. Where possible, only play materials and equipment that can be properly sanitized and disinfected will be available for the children participating in the child care service.
 6. Play material and equipment that cannot be properly sanitized and disinfected should be assigned to individual children and must not be shared among children.
 7. It is strongly recommended that stuffed toys should not be permitted in the child care service. Where stuffed toys are permitted, the toys should be used by only a single child and should be cleaned in a washing machine every week or more frequently if heavily soiled.
 8. Each homeroom should have its own toys. Toys should not be shared with other homerooms. Where children are sharing toys or participate in an activity that might involve sharing, children must wash their hands before and after the sharing/activity.
 9. Children in diapers should only be permitted to have washable toys.
 10. Assigned toys should be labelled and stored in each child's storage space when not in use.
 11. Each child's clothing and personal effects must be stored separately and sanitized and disinfected regularly.
 12. Children must not share towels or bedding.

Social Distancing and Handwashing:

1. Social distancing of 2 metres (6 feet) during large group activities (e.g., circle time), meal and nap time should be maintained.
2. Increased handwashing is required especially:
 - a. Before:

- i. Preparing food or eating;
 - ii. Treating wounds or caring for a sick person; and
 - iii. Inserting or removing contact lenses.
- b. After:
- i. Preparing food;
 - ii. Using the toilet, changing a diaper or cleaning up a child who has used the toilet;
 - iii. Touching an animal, animal feed or animal waste;
 - iv. Blowing your nose, coughing or sneezing;
 - v. Treating wounds or caring for a sick person;
 - vi. Handling garbage; and
 - vii. Handling pet food or pet treats.

Food Preparation and Storage Requirements:

1. All food (snacks and meals) must be provided by the parent, and must:
 - a. Follow the [Food Premises Regulations](#);
 - b. Follow Canada's Food Guide; and,
 - c. Not be shared between persons including between children and caregiver.
2. It is the responsibility of the parent and child care service to ensure all parents are aware of any individual health restrictions or allergies.
3. Sharing of dishes, drinking glasses, cups, eating utensils, towels, or bedding with other people or animals (family home) is not permitted. After using these items, they should be washed thoroughly with soap and water.

Other General Requirements:

1. It is the sole responsibility of the parent and the child care service to ensure all required procedures are followed to protect the health and safety of all persons accessing or participating in the child care service.
2. Any suspected case of COVID-19, unusual absenteeism or other concern should be reported to the local public health nurse.

3. Protective equipment for caregivers is not required. Should a caregiver request protective equipment, it is the responsibility of the child care service to ensure this issue is addressed.

4. The child care service must cease to operate where:
 - a. Any caregiver or child is identified as having exhibited signs or symptoms of respiratory illness within a 48 hour period prior to attending the child care service (e.g., before initial start day or over a weekend);
 - b. There is a confirmed case of COVID-19 among children or caregivers; or,
 - c. Directed by Public Health.

Application Process:

1. To avail of essential child care services, a parent must complete and submit an **Essential Worker Child Care Service Application** on-line at: <https://www.gov.nl.ca/covid-19/>.
2. All **Essential Worker Child Care Service Applications** will be screened for eligibility and matched to a child care service (based on availability).
3. Where matching is complete, parents and the child care service will be notified.

References:

Public Health Agency of Canada. Public health guidance for schools (K-12) and childcare programs (COVID-19) [Internet]. 2020 [last updated 2020 Feb 28; cited 2020 Mar 4].

https://www.ottawapublichealth.ca/en/public-health-topics/resources/Documents/COVID-19---Guidance-for-Child-Care-Setting_EN.pdf

<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/health/about-bc-s-health-care-system/office-of-the-provincial-health-officer/reports-publications/covid-19-guidance-for-schools-childcare-programs.pdf>

<https://www.cps.ca/en/tools-outils/covid-19-information-and-resources-for-paediatricians>

<https://www.gov.nl.ca/covid-19/files/Covid19-Hand-Washing-Poster.pdf>